

AU/ACSC/030/2000-04

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

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IS MEMBERSHIP OF NATO THE BEST ALTERNATIVE FOR
BULGARIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY?

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

April 2000

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE APR 2000		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Is Membership of NATO The Best Alternative For Bulgaria's National Security?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air University Press Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6615				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 31	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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Preface

I chose to study the role of NATO as a political and military organization for guaranteeing and enhancing the international security in Eastern Europe. According to my opinion it is of great importance because for so many years my people were taught to see NATO as the biggest enemy. For many people it is still hard to get free from the past. After all the democratic changes that took place in Eastern Europe followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of Warsaw Pact, NATO has remained the only power that can secure peace and stability in Europe. In my research I shall try to present all the efforts that NATO takes to enhance the international security in Europe and to convince the reader that active participation in the Partnership for Peace program and joining NATO will contribute greatly to the present and future Bulgarian national security.

I wish to express my gratitude to my advisor Wing Commander James B. Klein, Royal Air Force, who taught me how to make a research project and to the librarians from the AU Library who helped me find the sources for my research project.

Abstract

After the collapse of Soviet Union and the disintegration of Warsaw Pact followed by basic political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe, most of the former socialist states have remained vulnerable to aggression and coercion. Bulgaria is one of them. The Central and Eastern European region is continuing to accumulate tension and to produce threats based on ethnic and religious principles. It seems that NATO has remained the only power capable of guaranteeing peace and security in the region. It is simply impossible for Bulgaria to protect its national security and national sovereignty alone. The most reasonable solution to the problem is joining a powerful union such as NATO. But many Bulgarians still cannot look at NATO as a friend and a protector. They still suffer from the consequences of the former ideology.

For writing my paper I used different periodicals published in Bulgaria such as “Bulgarian Military Review”, published by the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense and “Security Policy”-Information Bulletin of the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense. Plenty of useful information I collected from periodicals published in the West such as “NATO Review”, “NATO Handbook”, “European Security”, “Strategic Review”, “Armed Forces Journal International”, “Officer”, and “NATO’s Sixteen Nations”. Additionally I used many documents found on the Internet.

At the beginning of my paper I analyze NATO, including its core functions, its strategic concept, its initiatives for enhancing European security, and how the politicians in Western Europe see the role of NATO for achieving its goals. After that I discuss NATO enlargement as a

key for enhancing security in Central and Eastern Europe and the impact of that enlargement on Russia and its interrelations with its previous allies. Next I direct the attention of the reader to the situation on the Balkans and how it affects Bulgarian national security. I examine alternatives to joining NATO for enhancing Bulgarian national security. I answer the question concerning what Bulgaria gains and loses by eventually securing membership in NATO. Finally I conclude that membership of NATO is the best solution for Bulgaria's national security needs.

Part 1

Introduction

Having defended its Cold War borders successfully, NATO must now look East and extend Europe's security environment in response to the shift of political gravity on the Continent. By encompassing Eastern Europe, NATO can provide an opportunity for a broader European security structure, and serve as a catalyst for democratic values across the Continent. Of all European security structures, only NATO can offer something beyond a mere forum for consultation.

—General James P. McCarthy, USAF (Ret.)

During the Cold War Bulgaria was a member of the Warsaw Pact (WP) whose security was provided by that alliance and especially by the former Soviet Union. The greatest enemy that the communist block faced was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and for Bulgaria it was of vital importance to be supported by other partners because it had a common border with two NATO counties - Turkey and Greece.

The year 1989 marked the beginning of fundamental political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The Bulgarian people like many other peoples made an historical choice and started the country on its way to democracy, human rights and liberty. The wind of changes led consequently to the collapse of the Soviet Union and to the disintegration of the WP. Facing the new reality and the new challenges Bulgaria had to find a way to provide for its future security. The nature of the relationship among the previous adversaries as well as among the previous partners changed dramatically. But in the Balkans remained centers that continued to accumulate tension based mainly on ethnic and religious principles. In the changed environment the threat did not come from the former enemy but from the uncertain future. In fact Bulgaria could not rely on further protection from any of its previous partners because every one

of them struggled to overcome the extreme difficulties in their transition to democratic society. But Bulgaria needed reliable support from a serious partner to enhance its democratic achievements and to protect it against any coercion by an unknown adversary.



Figure 1. Central Europe

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Map_collection/europe/C_Europe_pol96.jpg

In the context of the historic changes in CEE that began in 1989, NATO emerged as the only reliable political and military organization capable of providing and enhancing security in a changed Europe. The answers to two main questions could determine clearly the future of

European development and international security. The first one was how NATO saw its role in the changed environment and respectively what would be its attitude to the former adversary states. The second question was whether the former communist countries could change their view on NATO as a protector of their national security and interests and did they believe that joining the alliance was the best alternative for them.

The question of NATO's enlargement and its effect on the political, economic, and social life in CEE is of vital importance for the national security of the new democracies. In this paper I will search the solution to the question "Is Membership of NATO the Best Alternative for Bulgaria's National Security?" In seeking the answer I used different periodicals, published in Bulgaria and in the West, as well as some documents found on the Internet. My research is directed not only towards the military but also to the broad civilian audience in Bulgaria. At the beginning of my paper I analyze NATO, including its core functions, its strategic concept, its initiatives for enhancing European security, and how the politicians in Western Europe see the role of NATO for achieving its goals. After that I discuss NATO enlargement as a key for enhancing security in CEE and the impact of that enlargement on Russia and its interrelations with its previous allies. Next I direct the attention of the reader to the situation on the Balkans that is a possible threat for Bulgarian security in the region. I examine alternatives to joining NATO for enhancing Bulgarian security. I answer the question concerning what Bulgaria gains and loses by eventually securing membership in NATO. Finally I conclude that membership of NATO is the best solution for Bulgaria's national security needs.

Part 2

What is NATO?

Before we analyze the options for Bulgaria it is first important to look at NATO and what it stands for. It is worth reviewing how NATO originated, its core functions and strategic concept, and then compare the old NATO with NATO today, and the role of NATO from a political point of view.

Origin and Core Functions

NATO was founded in April 1949 in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which approved the right of every independent state to individual or collective defense. The initial purpose of the Alliance was to secure and preserve the national sovereignty and safety of its members against the threat of the growing military power of the Soviet Union and the political ambitions of its leadership. From the day of its foundation, NATO represented the vital link between North American and European security.

Now NATO is a political and military union of independent states strongly determined not only to preserve their own security but also to enhance the whole European security through mutual understanding, cooperation and partnership with other countries. On the way of achieving these objectives the Alliance is executing a series of security undertakings. It is making continuous efforts for establishing an environment with which to break down the desire of any country for hegemony and to serve as a barrier for coercive action against any European nation. Through its wide range of military capabilities NATO is playing a highly reliable deterring role for preventing eventual aggression against any of its members. Maybe NATO's most important

contemporary activity is its permanent and strong efforts for establishing trusting and reliable cooperation with nonmember countries by using political, economic and military consultations, programs for partnership and military education, exchange of information etc.¹

The Strategic Concept of the Alliance

Regarding the fundamental political and social changes that took place in the world over four decades after its foundation, NATO published a new Strategic Concept at its November 1991 Summit Meeting in Rome. The new concept was based on the general belief that there no longer existed a real threat of massive military confrontation in Europe. The idea for cooperative approaches to security shaped the new international relationship. All parties recognized that considering the integrity of military, political, economic, social and environmental factors would enhance international security. NATO saw the achievement of that primary goal in robust collaboration with other institutions and structures such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), the Western European Union (WEU) and the Council of Europe (CE). In the Strategic Concept, special attention was paid to future global threats such as proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, acts of terrorism, environmental scarcity and others that can influence the security of the Alliance.

NATO's vision for successfully meeting the new challenges is through permanent internal consultations and large cooperation and appropriate partnership with other states. Its policy of active dialogue and close relations with new partners is based on its determination to sustain a reliable collective defense capability and readiness to respond to any crisis or prevent any conflict that threatens the security interests of the Alliance. In short NATO's security policy is based on three mutually related and mutually enhanced factors: dialogue, cooperation and

¹ "What is NATO: Core Functions". *NATO Handbook* (1998), On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/1998/v003.htm>.

maintenance of collective defense capability. From a military perspective, the alliance remains defensive in purpose. The presence of US forces in Europe continues to be of decisive importance for European security and for the transatlantic partnership. Preserving the security of any member of the Alliance is equal to preserving the security of the organization as a whole. The deep changes that took place in the political and social life in Europe especially during the last decade had a crucial effect on the NATO's structure. Its forces decreased in number but increased their mobility and their flexibility. The attention was turned to the use of multinational forces within NATO's integrated military structure for meeting the new challenges and enhancing international security in Europe.²

NATO Today

The year 1991 marked the beginning of a new period of NATO development. At the Rome Summit Meeting the members of the Alliance expressed their approval and support for all the democratic changes that started in CEE. They showed open desire and the will to help the countries from those regions in carrying out the reform. The North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was founded on 20 December 1991 to guide the future development of the friendly relations between the Alliance and the CEE countries. Practical assistance as well as the sharing of political, military, economic and scientific experience was offered to the new partners. The main purpose was to establish an environment of mutual confidence and mutual help to further enhance of the international security in Europe.

Three factors excel with their essential contribution for the further adaptation and alteration of the Alliance. The first of them was the political initiative in the face of the NACC whose main purpose was to make easy the assistance with the new partners and to enhance the interrelations at all levels. The NACC paid attention also to the successful development of close relations not only with governmental institutions and organizations but with non-governmental structures too, for example The Atlantic Club in Bulgaria. In January 1994, NATO made one of its historic

² "The Transformation of the Alliance: The Strategic Concept of the Alliance". *NATO Handbook* (1998), On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/1998/v053.htm>.

steps in seeking an appropriate way of cooperation with new partners. The idea for creating and developing the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program was quickly approved by the members of the Alliance and by 25 CEE countries. Now PfP is a basic element in the structure of Euro-Atlantic security and is playing a decisive role in NATO's political initiatives. In 1997, when the NACC was transformed to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the Alliance cooperated with 22 NACC/PfP countries. All the initiatives undertaken under EAPC were characterized by two basic principles: the first principle was that of inclusiveness (every member of the Alliance or a partner had an equal right to get political consultation and practical cooperation) and the second was self-differentiation (every partner had the right to decide to what extent to cooperate with the Alliance). The second important factor was the development of cooperation in the defense and military arena. The first meeting between the Alliance defense ministers and their colleagues from the partner countries took place on 1 April 1992 with the aim of facilitating the relations and cooperation between the defense structures. That initial step was followed by regular multilateral and bilateral contacts which greatly contributed to increasing the transparency and confidence in interrelations and for enhancing the cooperation between the Ministries of Defense and the Armed Forces at both sides. The third factor was the continuously increasing authority of NATO in preventing crises, terminating conflicts and in peacekeeping operations. The events in former Yugoslavia are the best example in support of that idea.⁴

The Role of NATO from a Political Point of View

After the end of Cold War and the disintegration of WP many people asked the question "What was the necessity of the continuing existence of NATO?" Many people believed that the disappearance of the Soviet threat would automatically lead to obsolescence of the Alliance. During the Cold War the confrontation between the East and the West was a confrontation of institutions. Any institution on one side of the Iron Curtain was founded as a counterbalance to a respective institution on the other side. Nowadays institutions are playing multipurpose roles in an effort to establish a more secure regional and global environment. Therefore the right question

³Ibid

should be: “What will be NATO’s contribution to the emerging Euro-Atlantic security architecture?”⁵

We must look at this “architecture” as a product of a variety of political initiatives capable of forming and maintaining the stability in the strategic environment. NATO cannot achieve this goal alone. Safeguarding and enhancing the international security requires combined efforts with other partners, institutions, and organizations. However, based on its broad political consultations, military competencies and transatlantic relations, the Alliance possesses unique capabilities to develop the European integration process, to continue the relations with Russia as a responsible partner in the security process, to enhance further the Transatlantic Partnership and to prevent and respond to crises in the whole Euro-Atlantic area.

NATO is consolidating the European unity and is developing the European integration process by using two approaches: deepening and widening. The first process is embodied in the foundation of European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) within NATO. It marks an activation of initiatives of the Alliance in that direction. The second process is embodied in NATO’s belief that the new democracies in CEE deserve the right to define independent foreign policy and security partners. They all showed a clear orientation to closer relations with the Alliance and a readiness to commit a series of domestic reforms as a necessary condition for membership. NATO itself also realizes that keeping the door open for new members greatly contributes to shaping the strategic environment in a positive manner. The usefulness of constructive relations with non-NATO nations is best seen in the role played by the PfP program.

⁴ “What is NATO: NATO Today”. *NATO Handbook* (1998), On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/1998/v005.htm>.

⁵ Michael Ruhle, “Taking another look at NATO’s role in European security”. *NATO Review*, WEBEDITION, vol.46, No. 4 (Winter 1998), pp.20-23, On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1998/9804-06.htm>.

27 nations responded to that initiative of the Alliance performing strong determination for establishing a new collective security in the Euro-Atlantic area.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

Part 3

NATO Enlargement-A Key for Enhancing Security in CEE

In the previous part it became clear that in the changed political and social environment NATO had a new objective to enhance stability in Europe as a whole. In order to achieve this goal successfully NATO needs to increase the number of its members. Let us see first how the idea of NATO's enlargement developed through its history and to analyze what may be the inevitable impact of that process on NATO-Russia relations and CEE-Russia relations.

The Opinion of NATO

From the dawn of its establishment, the Alliance stated a clear decision to leave the door open for any other European state which recognized the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) and was ready to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. This decision was reflected in Article 10 of the Treaty signed on 4 April 1949. During the Cold War only four countries joined the initial union of twelve states. At the Brussels Summit in January 1994, by taking in consideration the deep political and social changes in Europe, the allied leaders again brought up the question of NATO enlargement. However, two related questions needed to get a complete answer. Those questions were "why and how NATO needs to expand". As a result in 1995 the "Study on NATO Enlargement" was published establishing the joining criteria for new members.

Answering the first question of "why" NATO needs to expand, the Study states that the fundamental political changes in CEE created unique and favorable conditions for enhancing stability in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area and for making the process of democratization

irrevocable. The Study regards the enlargement of NATO in a close relation with the further enlargement of the EU, WEU, and OSCE. It also states the common belief that the future integration does not have the aim to threaten any other state or union of states but its main goal is to enhance stability and security for all the countries in the Euro-Atlantic area.⁷

Answering the second question of “how” the Alliance will expand in the future, the Study restates that it will again be in accordance with Article 10 of the NAT. Further, the Study states the firm decision of the allied countries to prevent any attempt by a new member to create obstacles for admission of other states seeking for membership. But at the same time it establishes a very important principle for the admission of new members. Every interested country has to show a strong and sincere desire and to be able to support all the initiatives that NATO undertakes for enhancing the collective defense and security and its peacekeeping missions. Active participation in EAPC and PfP may have a great positive effect on the allied countries to take a common decision for inviting a new member. The last example confirming the determination of the Alliance to keep the process of its enlargement open was the invitation to Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to start talks for joining NATO at the Madrid Summit in July 1997. In 1999 these three countries became regular members of the Alliance. But this was not the end of the process of NATO enlargement because it was not a single event. The dialogue and the broad relationship with the aspiring members continue. Currently the year of 2002 is designated for the next invitation for membership.⁸

⁷ “The Opening Up of the Alliance: The Invitation to New Member Countries”. *NATO Handbook* (1998), On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/1998/v057.htm>.

⁸ Ibid.

NATO Enlargement and Russia

It is obvious that when we discuss the process of NATO enlargement it is necessary to analyze what the impact will be of this process on Russia and its relations with the Alliance and its previous partners from the disintegrated WP. It will be right to say that the long lasting confrontation is still nourishing the prejudices from the past. Normally many people support the idea that any enlargement of NATO eastward will provoke a negative effect on Russia and will lead to aggravation of the established relationship. For the same reason, it is normal for Russia to show acute sensitivity to the expanding of the Alliance over its previous partners from the WP.

There are three factors that if understood properly can help Russia to overcome its apprehensions that the enlargement of NATO is a threat to its security. First of all it must be clear that the CEE countries aspiring to a NATO membership are all independent and democratic states and it is their legal right to choose how to protect their security and independence. The fact that they desire to get access to the Alliance has only one meaning and it is that they wish to contribute to the establishment of collective security and defense system and to the enhancing of stability over the whole area of Europe. And also it is a fact that all these countries do not ever want to be taken over by Russia again politically and economically.

The second factor is the nature and the military structure of the Alliance. NATO countries have always stated their firm position that the enlargement of the alliance would not change its defensive character. In addition to that NATO leaders do not plan to station nuclear weapons on any of the new members' territory. They even proposed to Russia to continue the talks for reduction of the conventional arms in Europe.⁹

⁹ Dr. Javier Solana, "NATO Enlargement and Russia". *NATO News Articles*, Article from "*The European*", April 10-16. (1997), On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/articles/1997/a970410a.htm>.

The third factor is the definite desire of NATO to continue the improvement of its relationship with Russia and its strong belief that they should work together to establish a stable and secure environment in Europe. The ex-NATO Secretary General, Dr. Javier Solana views three main reasons in support of that idea. The first reason reflects the universal belief that the cooperation and consultations between NATO and Russia make our life safer. The NATO-Russia Founding Act of May 1997 proved unequivocally that there was no alternative to cooperation between them. This cooperation ranges from preventing proliferation to joint approaches to crisis management. The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) institutionalized the regular political consultations between them. These consultations broach all matters affecting common security.

The second reason reflects the belief that NATO and Russia can do any job better if they do that job together. NATO and Russia still have some differences in their views for solving some international political and security problems but it is not an obstacle to work together. The joint participation of NATO and Russian forces in the Stabilization Forces (SFOR) in Bosnia was a clear example for the positive effect of their common peacekeeping efforts.

The third reason reflects the belief of both NATO and Russia that they need to go ahead in close relation and cooperation based on transparency and mutual confidence. Now all the people realize that only collective security means security for any country. One cannot enhance one's security at the expense of others. The necessity of building a joint future demands the building and keeping of joint security. Finally because it is a two-way process it is up to NATO how to convince Russia that its enlargement is not a threat to its security. It is up to Russia to keep on

the road to democracy, which will help it to change its world-outlook and to overcome its groundless fears.¹⁰

¹⁰ Dr. Javier Solana, "Opinion Edited". *NATO News Articles*, Article from "*Izvestia*", 28 May (1998), On-line. Internet, 6 November 1999, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/articles/1998/a980528a.htm>.

Part 4

Bulgaria's Security Policy and NATO Enlargement

Before analyzing the alternatives for Bulgaria's national security let us make a short overview on the situation in the Balkans and the possible threats for it and then address what Bulgaria gains and loses by eventually joining NATO. Finally, we will discuss the right solution for Bulgaria's security needs.

Bulgaria and the Balkans

The geostrategic location of Bulgaria links the country directly with areas of conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia, where the intersection of different political interests is a permanent source of tension. The quantitative and qualitative imbalance in the armed forces and armaments among the Balkan states is another source of anxiety. Environmental resources, national and international organized crime, major drug trafficking and goods smuggling, ethnic and religious conflicts and other non-traditional sources of tension can easily escalate into military clashes. The crisis in the former Yugoslavia is currently determining the stability in the Balkans. The process of building new independent states that started at the beginning of the 90s was accompanied by political and economic crisis and led to spontaneous escalation of nationalism, ethnic and religious intolerance and cleansing, and territorial controversies. Despite the continuous efforts of UN, EU, NATO and the other independent states, the region still accumulates tension and is a threat for the security of the neighboring states. To the south, Bulgaria shares borders with two NATO countries - Greece and Turkey - who also have a long lasting dispute over islands and maritime claims in the Aegean

and over the invasion of Cyprus. All these factors prove unambiguously the necessity for establishing a collective security and defense system in the region as a best guarantee for safeguarding the national sovereignty of Bulgaria and the other independent states in the Balkans.¹¹



Figure 2. The Balkans

Source: Microsoft, World Atlas 97, ENCARTA

Alternatives to Joining NATO

The conclusion of the previous parts is that Bulgaria needs to join a reliable political or military organization for there to be a guarantee for its national security. Let us examine the

¹¹ Maj Gen Nesho Neshev (Ret.), "Bulgaria's National security, The Balkans and NATO". *BULGARIAN MILITARY REVIEW*, vol.4, No.2 (Summer 1996), published by the Ministry of Defense, 51-57.

alternatives for the Bulgarian security. Bulgaria had to choose between three main alternatives for its national security: to keep neutrality within the European security architecture; to integrate with ESDI in the face of EU; or to integrate with NATO assuming that the Alliance will expand to the East and will protect the new members by its collective security system.

The idea of neutrality is supported by those whose arguments are that in its 20th Century history Bulgaria has participated in different coalitions during the wars that the country led and every time it was on the side of the losers. But it is very doubtful if it is possible to keep neutrality nowadays in its traditional type at all. It needs a long period of time, favorable conditions and the support of other countries to achieve a reliable international recognition. There are two types of neutrality. The first is *Structural neutrality* which is characteristic of the bipolar system. It is the neutrality of Austria after 1955 and of Yugoslavia after 1949. With the end of the bipolar opposition this alternative became unacceptable. The new international system creates a variety of opportunities and forms of interactions. There is no interest of establishing structural neutrality because it does not respond to the new international objectives and is alien to a world where diversity and pluralism prevail in international relations. The second is *Satellite neutrality* means to get the support of any major power in return for loyalty to its interests. The best example is Finland and its relationship with the former Soviet Union. The high dynamic of the contemporary international process and the unpredictability of the interrelationship make this alternative unacceptable too. Bulgaria has a bitter historical experience of representing this type of neutrality as well as of deliberate co-operation with one great power or another. Nobody knows what will be the situation in the future multipolar world.¹²

The idea of ESDI is to create an independent military power and defense community able to conduct a normal sovereign policy with minimum dependence on American influence. In no way

¹² Valery Ratchev, "Searching for the Right Solution: Bulgarian Security Policy was Confronted with a Difficult Choice". *European Security*, vol.6, No.2 (Summer 1997), published by Frank Cass. London, 70-72.

can it be considered as the emergence of anti-American tendencies or a change in the transatlantic relationship. By becoming a member of the EU, Bulgaria will be able to integrate with the so called three 'columns' of the union: cooperation in the free movement of people, capital and commodities; co-ordination of foreign policy, defense and security; and cooperation in the sphere of domestic affairs, anti-terrorism, illegal drug and arms traffic, and other criminal activities. There are three necessary conditions for the building of independent European defense system. First is the foundation of a federal European Union with a common foreign and defense policy. Second there will be a need for integrated conventional armed forces. Third is the necessity of creating and maintaining an independent European nuclear deterrent potential. Currently Bulgaria does not have enough opportunities to exercise its capabilities as a stabilizing factor in the region. In this case it is more important to Bulgaria to draw the attention of the EU as a significant contributor supporting the interests of the union in the Balkans rather than focusing on potential threats to European security.¹³

NATO membership seems to be the most realistic alternative for Bulgaria's national security. There are several reasons that make NATO the only power capable of providing guarantees of security, safety and collective defense in Europe. Three out of five permanent members of the UN Security Council, six out of the seven members of the G-7, eleven out of the fifteen members of the EU, ten out of the ten members of the WEU are NATO countries, and four out of six largest stockholders of the World Bank which appoint five of the twenty-one executive directors. In other words NATO possesses enough mechanisms and unique capabilities to control world affairs even in the most critical of situations. For that reason any integration of Bulgaria with NATO will help to get access to full incorporation within the European political, economic and social system.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid. 72-74.

¹⁴ Dr. Solomon Passy, "NATO Membership: What We Gain and What We Lose". *BULGARIAN MILITARY REVIEW*, vol.4, No.2 (Summer 1996), published by the Ministry of Defense, 58-60.

NATO Membership: What We Gain and What We Lose

There are two main groups of consequences of Bulgaria's incorporation into NATO: political and military-strategic. I will draw your attention first to these consequences and after that will explain the possible consequences of non-integration of Bulgaria into NATO. According to their effect the consequences may be positive or negative. Here are some of the positive political effects for Bulgaria as a result of integration with NATO. First of all, by joining one of the symbols of the liberal democratic world, Bulgaria is joining a political and military organization of great potential and international prestige. Today there is no other power with the capabilities of NATO in creating conditions for co-operation in the new European security architecture. Joining the Alliance will automatically increase the political and economic attractiveness of the country. It will reinforce the opportunities for joining the other European structures too. Political contacts with the leading European nations will link unbreakably the national interests of Bulgaria with those of the Alliance. By becoming a member of NATO, Bulgaria will turn a reliable positive factor for maintaining security and stability in the region. Finally the integration with NATO will contribute greatly for the further development of Bulgaria on its way to democracy.¹⁵

Along with the positive political consequences of joining the Alliance there are also some negatives. First, because the integration will lead to the establishment of a new decision-making system complying with the style of the existing NATO order it may cause some political and public discontent. The undesirable effect may be overcome by giving more information to the politicians and to the public in regard to the status, activity and prospects for NATO. Second, Bulgaria's membership of NATO will make the country a target for nuclear attack in a global or even regional conflict irrespective of whether or not there are stored nuclear weapons on its territory. Third, the most negative effect will be on the relations between Bulgaria and Russia. They will change dramatically and become more complicated. Bulgaria will face many difficulties in meeting its needs of strategic resources and especially for maintaining and supplying its armed forces. The former Soviet Union was Bulgaria's greatest supplier of natural gas, petroleum products, technologies and military equipment. It was also the biggest market for the Bulgarian export. By joining NATO, Bulgaria faces the real threat of losing all those

¹⁵ Valery Ratchev, "Searching for the Right Solution", 76-79.

privileges. That means that Bulgaria will need rapid integration within the economic structures of Western Europe.¹⁶

From a military-strategic point of view, NATO membership will place Bulgaria in the European defense zone under the control of the Alliance. Backing on the preventive capabilities of NATO political and military power will get the opportunity to exercise sufficient control over the escalation of tensions, conflicts and crisis threatening its security. The negative military balance between Bulgaria and its neighboring states will no longer be a source of anxiety. Joining the Alliance will catalyze the reform in Bulgarian armed forces and will improve training and military education of personnel, troops and staff. Bulgaria's military doctrine will correspond to the military doctrine of the Alliance. Regular participation of Bulgarian armed forces in different peacemaking and peacekeeping missions of NATO will have a great positive effect on enrichment of their practical experience. At the same time it is clear that integration with NATO will immediately increase the interest of non-NATO military intelligence and reconnaissance on Bulgaria. Some people surely will not approve the different forms of foreign military presence, which will be an inevitable result of the integration. Membership may also cause some threats from fundamentalist anti-West or anti-American terrorist organizations. And finally the geo-strategic location of Bulgaria places the country at the margin of NATO's zone of responsibility, which is an additional challenge for its security.¹⁷

The final factors to consider are the possible consequences of the non-integration of Bulgaria into NATO. First of all the aspiration of Bulgaria to integrate within European political, economic and defense structures will hardly achieve their final objectives, namely to enhance its democratic development, to achieve economic prosperity and to guarantee its national security. Political vagueness and hesitation and economic crisis will make the country an unattractive

¹⁶ Ibid. 79-80 .

political and economic partner for a long time ahead. The reform in the armed forces will be exposed to a failure. The lack of technological innovations and economic restrictions will increase the military imbalance in comparison with Bulgaria's neighboring states. The worst consequence will be the continuous sense of insecurity and isolation felt by the Bulgarian people in regard to their state and their nation.¹⁸

In conclusion by declaring its firm desire to join NATO, Bulgaria has made the right decision. It was its final political choice. Membership will bring to light new objectives for Bulgarian domestic and foreign policy. It will bring new responsibilities and new challenges. Best of all is that it will mark the beginning of rapid and irreversible integration of Bulgaria into all other European political, economic and defense structures.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid. 80-82.

¹⁸ Ibid. 82-83.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Part 5

Conclusions

Bulgaria has consistently demonstrated that it is ready and willing to contribute to international security.... And Bulgaria is showing dedicated efforts, which the Alliance has recognized, in preparing for possible future NATO membership.... Your achievements prove that, in today's Europe, geography is no longer destiny. It is now inevitable that the countries of this region will continue to draw even closer to each other, and to the rest of the Euro-Atlantic area.

—Dr. Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO

In this paper I tried to answer what is the right solution for Bulgaria's national security. The fundamental political, economic and social changes that took place in Europe placed the country in a situation of uncertainty and unknown threats. Bulgaria had to make a very difficult choice on who would be the best guarantor for its national sovereignty. First I tried to present some of the main characteristics of NATO including its core functions, strategic concept, its security initiatives and how the West European politicians see its role for enhancing security and stability in Europe. Next I discussed the enlargement of NATO as a key for building the new European security structure and what was its impact on Russia and its relations with the countries in CEE. Finally I analyzed the alternatives to joining NATO for Bulgaria's national security. By answering the question of what Bulgaria gains and loses by eventually joining NATO, I concluded that a full membership of the Alliance is the best alternative for the secure development of Bulgaria on its way to democracy.

Glossary

CE	Council of Europe	
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe	
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council	
ESDI	European Security and Defense Identity	
EU	European Union	
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council	
NAT	North Atlantic Treaty	
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe	
PfP	Partnership for Peace	
PJC	Permanent Joint Council	
SFOR	Stabilization Forces	
UN	United Nations	
WEU	Western European Union	
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction	
WP	Warsaw	Pact

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